CATECHISM OF THE VOWS

COTEL — JOMBART — McCABE

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Catechism of
The Vows

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Catechism of
The Vows

FOR THE USE OF RELIGIOUS

By FATHER PETER COTEL, S.J.

Twenty-Eighth Edition
Carefully Revised and Harmonized with
The Code of Canon Law
By FATHER EMILE JOMBART, S.J.

Translated by
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PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1861[1]

OUR aim in this little work is to furnish religious with exact knowledge of the nature and the principal obligations of their state. These obligations, as they are well aware, are those of the three vows of religion by which they have consecrated themselves to the Lord. We wish therefore to present to them the teaching of the Church herself on this subject, and to our mind nothing is more worthy of their attention than such a consideration of *principles* clearly stated and set apart from the *secondary points* with which they are ordinarily mingled elsewhere.

In the hope of doing a more useful service, we have undertaken to make this summary of the duties of the religious life as brief as it is exact and complete in its kind. But the chief object of our care has been to draw a clear line between the obligations imposed by the *vow* and what is required over and above for the practice of the *virtue*, in such a way that religious may be able to *distinguish* with precision the rigorous *duty* of

[1] Slightly abridged.

conscience from what must further be done in order to arrive at *perfection*. It is on this point, as a matter of fact, that we often meet with regrettable ignorance or with uncertainties and doubts which weary souls and can even produce false consciences.

Catechetical form has seemed to us more suitable than any other for our purpose. By means of the questions put, it makes us place our finger, so to speak, upon words of importance which might otherwise escape notice or remain but partly understood. Likewise, it facilitates the orderly exposition of things to those who have to teach them, and helps no less those who are studying them to grasp them more clearly, to retain them better and to be able to render a more faithful account of them. We have multiplied questions in order to give, as far as possible, short answers. However, several points seem to demand still further explanation—this we have placed after the brief response to the question proposed.

It is from the purest sources of theology that we have drawn; we affirm nothing save in accord with the most approved masters and the common teaching of authorities.

Notice

(*Prefixed to the Edition of 1861*)[1]

It seems advisable to call attention here to three points:

I. This little book is an elementary work intended for general use; hence it cannot pretend to satisfy all the demands of specialists.

For this reason we are glad to indicate some sources to which directors, superiors and masters of novices may have recourse. Besides Father Rodriguez' *Christian Perfection*, Part III, we must mention the excellent treatises of Fathers Louis de Ponte, Alvarez de Paz and Antoine le Gaudier, on the same subject; Father Jerome Platus, *du Bien de l'état religieux;* Father Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure, *l'Homme religieux;* St. Thomas, *De Statibus, 2a 2æ, q. 183* and following; Suarez, *De Religione;* and finally Father Gautrelet, who in his *Traité de l'état religieux* has made a digest of the doctrine of the theologians.[2]

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[1] Slightly abridged.

[2] The reader must not be surprised, in the case of delicate matter like the present, to meet with some differences of opinion among the best writers; they agree on essential points, at least. To the necessarily incomplete list here given, add one work in French: *Religieux et Religieuses* by J. Creusen, S.J. (1921). Consult also De Smedt (Bollandist), *Notre Vie surnaturelle*, Vol. II, pp. 122–150 (obedience) and pp. 269–305 (chastity and poverty).

We do not think that our brevity of treatment has detracted from the clearness of the work. Undoubtedly this precise language needs a certain development; that is, some explanation of its full meaning, in order to bring it within the understanding of many; and in particular, the general notions which are found in such a work must be made tangible by examples and applications, for those who have not the habit of thus generalizing their ideas. But it seems to us that this sort of explanation can easily be given by anyone who understands the text well, without its being strictly necessary to have recourse to other sources.

With such explanation, this little book, we hope, will not only become a guide for religious souls, but will in addition nurture piety, when parts of it are read with recollection in the presence of God and by way of short meditation or examen.

II. Since our principal aim is to point out the obligations of the religious life, we have thought it necessary only to recall, rather than to explain at length, other matters which concern positive perfection.

III. Some superiors of congregations, while receiving the *Catechism of the Vows* with a goodwill, for which we thank them, have asked us to modify it in accord with their own institutes,

that it thus may be placed in the hands of their inferiors.

We would ask these superiors to notice, first, that in leaving untouched this doctrinal exposition of principles we better preserve its full weight and keep it more instructive for all; and this is the judgment of several prudent persons whom we have consulted. Again, since there is here question chiefly of the obligation of the vows, and since the book of rules is at hand to give all other details peculiar to each institute, the modifications to be introduced into the *Catechism* reduce themselves to a very few heads, which can well be inserted at the end of the book in a brief appendix, printed or written.

In our opinion, about the only questions demanding special answers are the following:

1. When and by whom was the congregation approved?
2. What is the length of the noviceship or probation before the vows?
3. What vows are made?
4. Who has the right of annulling them or dispensing from them?
5. What is the precise matter of the vow of poverty in the congregation?
6. Who has the power to command in virtue of the vow of obedience?

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1919

In re-editing and revising this excellent work, we shall undoubtedly win the approval of numerous religious communities to whom some twenty preceding editions have been so useful.[1]

Between the edition of 1861 and that of 1888 there were scarcely any alterations. In the present edition our aim is as follows:

1. To introduce into the text the modifications prescribed by the Code of Canon Law recently promulgated.

2. To affirm only propositions that are certain, distinguishing them clearly from controverted points.

3. With this in view, to depart—rarely, however—from certain features of the doctrine of Father Cotel, generally so remarkable in its exactitude.

4. To effect a more clear-cut distinction between canonico-moral questions, which involve obligations imposed under pain of sin, and asceti-

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[1] Before the Code of Canon Law there had been as many as twenty-six French editions of the *Catechism* (the first dating from 1859) and, not to speak of imitations, numerous translations in various languages, even in Chinese.

cal questions, which deal with perfection; for this purpose, the latter type of questions, the text of which we have but slightly revised, will be marked with an asterisk.

5. To illustrate by examples passages which were too abstract.

6. To insert some footnotes; these will be predominantly references to articles of the Code, indicated by the letter *C* (Canon).

7. To enliven the style somewhat.

8. To number the questions; the abbreviation *No.* will refer to these numbers.

May this manual of a pious and learned author[1] spread abroad once more its kindly light!

E. J.

Enghien, Belgium, August 5, 1919, *Feast of Our Lady of the Snows.*

Notice

Prefixed to the Twenty-eighth (French) Edition, 1922

This edition differs little from that of 1919. Apart from some points which have been clarified or made more definite, the changes for the most part touch only the form and leave intact the substance of the preceding edition.

E. J.

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[1] Father Cotel is known for other works, notably: *Les Principes de la vie religieuse,* or *Explication du Catéchisme des voeux; la Piété éclairée par la Foi; Grand Commentaire sur les Exercises de saint Ignace.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Some time ago, happening upon Father Jombart's post-Code revision of this well-known little work of Father Cotel, and learning that it had not as yet appeared in English, the present translator was moved to devote his spare moments to the interests of novices and religious in English-speaking lands by providing them with a completely new version of the latest revision of the *Catechism of the Vows*.

Accuracy has been my aim in the work; and it is my hope that in imitating the original simplicity of style, I have kept the satisfying clarity characteristic of Father Cotel, no less than of Father Jombart in his writings and in his animated lectures on Canon Law, which latter it was my privilege during two years to attend.

Let me here acknowledge the goodness of Father Jombart and his Superiors in granting permission for the translation, and that of Fathers Leo W. Keeler, Antoine Dragon and Joseph A. Gschwend, who gave me important help.

The translator's best reward will be a place in the prayers of the novices, religious and their directors, who may use the booklet.

WILLIAM H. MCCABE, S.J.

Enghien, Belgium.

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PART I

THE VOWS OF RELIGION IN GENERAL

Chapter I

General Notion of the Vow Considered in the Vows of Religion

1. What is a *vow?*

A vow is "*a free and deliberate promise made to God of a possible and better act,*"[1] i.e., of an act more perfect than its opposite.

2. What do you understand by the term *promise?*

I understand, not a simple resolution, but an *obligation* imposed on oneself *under pain of sin.*

The vow is not to be confused with many resolutions which we make before God, even in the form of promises, in order to arouse ourselves to His better service. In

[1] C. 1307.

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order really to make a vow, we must have the formal intention of binding ourselves under pain of sin.

3. Why do you say a *deliberate* promise?

Because a vow requires an exact knowledge of what is promised, full consent, and complete liberty.

Thus, a religious must know clearly to what he binds himself by his vows on entering a particular order or congregation; and the acquisition of this knowledge is partly the purpose of the novitiate.

Thus again, he must reflect, try his will and test his strength in the practice of the kind of life he is about to embrace; this is another purpose of the novitiate.

Finally, his vows would be null—in other words, not binding—if he were to make them only through constraint or as a result of a grave and unjustly inflicted fear of men.

4. Why do you say: *a promise made to God?*

Because a vow is an act of supreme worship due to God alone. A vow cannot be made to men, nor even, strictly speaking, to the Blessed Virgin or the Saints, but to God only. It is a contract entered into with the Divine Majesty.

From this the religious should realize how inviolable is the bond of his vows, and that it even demands that he set aside all thought of inconstancy. If God has given to His Church the power to release from vows, those who exercise that power in His Name have always the duty of safeguarding His rights; they cannot remove at their own good pleasure or at the whim of men an obligation contracted toward the Sovereign Master (Nos. 11, 12).

5. What is the effect of this promise made to God?

The effect of a vow is that the performance of the thing promised, whatever it may be, becomes an act of the *virtue of religion*, the most excellent of all moral virtues; and its omission becomes a culpable violation of that same virtue—a sacrilege.

The virtue of religion has as its object the worship or honor due to God.

6. Explain further the obligation of a vow.

Since it is an obligation freely self-imposed, a vow binds only in so far as one intended to bind oneself, which is to be understood of the matter, the time, the place, the manner and other circumstances, and even of the nature of the bond, which can oblige either under pain of mortal or only of venial sin, according to the intention of the person vowing.[1]

7. Is one free to limit thus at will the vows which one makes on entering religion?

No; because spiritual authority possesses in regard to the vows the same right which civil authority has regarding contracts. It can determine the conditions whose non-observance will

[1] In non-grievous matter one cannot bind oneself under pain of mortal sin.

involve the nullity of a vow. The condition imposed for the vows of religion is that they be made in the sense specified by the Church and by the constitutions of the religious institute [1] in which they are pronounced. The individual is not free to broaden or narrow these obligations, though he is free to assume them or not.

8. What is the gravity of the obligation imposed by the vows of religion?

In general, the vows of religion bind under pain of mortal sin; yet levity of matter, lack of reflection or of consent can render an infraction only venial. There may even be no fault at all, if attention or intention be entirely wanting (Nos. 49 and following, 91 and following, 118, 120, 131, 132).

9. Is one always bound to fulfil a vow?

Yes, unless it becomes impossible, or unless one is legitimately released from the obligation.[2]

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1 Since the Code, the term "*religio*" means any religious institute (order or congregation). C. 488, 1.

2 C. 1311: "A vow ceases with the passing of the time fixed for the termination of the obligation (*I made a vow for three years, and those three years have passed*), a substantial change in the matter promised (*I promised a certain pilgrimage, but the sanctuary has been destroyed*), the non-fulfillment of a condition on which the vow depended (*I had promised to make a certain pilgrimage if the weather was good, but it rained*), cessation of the final cause (*I made a vow for the cure of my son, but he died*), annulment, dispensation, commutation." (No. 12.)

10. When is one legitimately released from a vow?

A vow (and hence its obligation) can be validly removed only by competent authority and for a worthy reason; since there is question of a contract made with God, man, His representative, cannot nullify that bond without sufficient reason.

11. What is to be said of a person who, in order to be released from a vow, has recourse to fraud and fictitious reasons?

The release from his vow is null, and consequently the obligation continues.

12. What is to be said of a religious who, by his unworthy conduct, obliges superiors to release him from his vows?

He offends God grievously; but the release from his vows is valid (unless the constitutions determine otherwise), since, on the part of the order or congregation, there exists a motive quite sufficient for dismissing him.

Without entering into lengthy details on the *dispensation, annulment* and *commutation* of vows, we shall make but three remarks:

1. To *dispense* from vows requires ecclesiastical jurisdiction: by the indult of *secularization*, the Bishop can dispense from the vows of religion in diocesan congrega-

tions, the Holy See[1] alone in institutes approved by the Holy See (No. 19).[2]

2. The legitimate *dismissal* of a religious of temporary vows *annuls* his vows.[3] (He is considered to have made them with the *tacit condition* that they cease in case of dismissal.)

Dismissal after perpetual vows does *not* annul the vows, unless otherwise provided by the constitutions or by the Holy See.[4]

In all institutes, the superior can *annul* any *private* vow[5] made by an inferior; always effective, this annulment is permissible for a just cause.[6]

In general, a vow which is injurious to religious observance is of itself null, as not being the promise of a better act.

3. To *commute* a vow is to change its matter. For example, to substitute the recitation of the rosary for a promised fast. Who can commute the vows of religion? Those who can dispense from them.[7]

13. Why do you say that the vow is a promise made to God of an act *better* than its opposite?

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[1] The expression, "the Holy See," means the Pope and the Roman Congregations which assist him in the government of the Church: C. 7.

[2] Cc. 638 and 640, 2. Those secularized are excluded from certain ecclesiastical offices: C. 642.

[3] C. 648. After temporary vows a religious can be dismissed from his institute for grave reasons (*not because of sickness, unless it had been fraudulently concealed before the vows*), without strictly judiciary procedure. But he always retains the right to defend himself and the right of recourse to the Holy See: C. 647.

[4] C. 669, § 1. After perpetual vows only incorrigible religious of either sex are liable to expulsion. The dismissal of male religious requires a formal process following several futile warnings; that of female religious can be effected only by the Bishop, in the case of diocesan congregations; by the Congregation of Religious, in the case of other institutes.

[5] "A vow is public if accepted in the name of the Church by a legitimate ecclesiastical superior; if not, it is private." C. 1308, § 1. The vows of religion (No. 15) are public vows; others are nearly always private.

[6] C. 1312.

[7] C. 1314.

Because if this were not so, the vow would not attain its end of rendering a special worship to God.

14. What are these better acts which can be vowed to God?

The acts which can constitute the matter of vows may all be reduced to these three classes: (1) acts already obligatory; (2) those which are of counsel; (3) acts which are indifferent in themselves.

1. *In an act already commanded,* the vow adds to the obligation of the precept a second obligation: henceforth the performance of that act includes two kinds of moral goodness and merit, just as its omission involves a double malice. Thus, suppose one has made a vow to observe the Sixth Commandment of God: when he resists the temptation to violate it, he adds to the merit of observing the precept the merit of the *virtue of religion.* His act has consequently become better. But when he violates his vow, he adds to the sin against the precept another sin—of *sacrilege*—against the virtue of religion.

2. *If an act is only of counsel*—for instance, not to marry—the vow adds to a thing already better in itself a new excellence, that of the virtue of religion.

3. *When an act is indifferent in itself,* there is, beyond the good intention with which one can perform it, a higher means of rendering it good and meritorious. This is, to bind oneself to it by vow. It becomes then an act of the virtue of religion. In the religious state, not only do the vows increase the value of the acts which they directly command, but the most indifferent actions, done through obedience (in order the better to observe the vow, even when it does not oblige under pain of sin), form a rich

source of merit (Nos. 123, 129). St. Thomas gives the following explanation of the term *religious:* while other Christians practice the virtue of religion only at intervals, religious exercise this great virtue continually, and their whole life, if they but wish it, becomes a *holocaust* wherein everything without exception is consecrated to the divine worship.

Chapter II

Excellence of the Vows of Religion; State of Perfection

***15. Are there several kinds of vows? Which are the more meritorious?**

There are different kinds of vows, but we have not space to explain them all here. However, of all vows the most meritorious beyond doubt are the *three vows of religion*, which bind to the practice of the *evangelical counsels*, i.e., the *vows of poverty, chastity* and *obedience* which are made in the *religious state*.

Such is the excellence of the vows of religion that the holy Doctors compare the religious profession to baptism or martyrdom, and affirm that the religious profession has the power of *suspending* all obligations previously contracted by any other vow.[1] The chief reason is that by religious profession one gives *everything* to God, whereas by other vows one promises Him only some particular good works. Furthermore, individual practices are ordinarily less suited to common life, or might even be to the detriment of *religious discipline* (No. 137).

[1] These obligations consequently revive in case one leaves the institute. C. 1315.

***16. Bring out more clearly why the vows of religion are so excellent.**

Their pre-eminence over all the others arises from the fact that they constitute the *religious state* or the *state of perfection.*

17. What is the *religious state?*

It is *a state wherein one makes profession of tending to perfection,* or, to develop this definition a bit, it is *a form of life approved by the Church, wherein some of the faithful, joined in a society, establish themselves in order to tend to perfection by means of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which they make according to the Rule.*[1]

***18. Why do you say a *state*, a *form of life*, wherein one *establishes oneself* permanently?**

Because the excellence of the religious life consists precisely in this *fixed state* in which a soul places herself, and in this happy necessity of serving God which she imposes on herself. Now this stability is produced by the obligation of the vows, just as that of the married state is the effect of the nuptial contract; hence the religious profession is rightly called a union of the soul with Jesus Christ, whose spouse she becomes.

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1 C. 487 and following.

A religious therefore does more for God and for self-sanctification by entering the religious state than if he were to stay in the world, even with the intention of there practicing the Christian virtues. Hence St. Thomas teaches that in itself it is better, though more easy, to embrace the religious state than to devote oneself to the most rigorous penances during long years in the world.

Nevertheless, religious should remember that it is not exactly the state which constitutes sanctity, and that merit before God and men consists much less in taking vows than in keeping them.

19. Why is it necessary that this form of life and this state be *approved by the Church?*

Because it is for the Church to judge whether or not a form of life is in accord with evangelical holiness; and it is also hers to constitute the religious body, establish its powers and sanction all its obligations.

A *religious order* properly-so-called requires the approbation of the Head of the Church.

A simple *religious congregation* requires at least that of the Bishop. As soon as a congregation has obtained from the Holy See a decree praising its institute (not merely the founder of the institute or its purpose), it is an "institute approved by the Holy See."[1]

There are therefore three kinds of religious institutes: (1) orders, in which solemn vows are taken (No. 28); (2) congregations approved by the Holy See; (3) diocesan congregations.

20. What is the meaning of the words: *in order to tend to perfection?*

[1] Cc. 488 and 492.

They mean that the religious state does not suppose *perfection already acquired*, but that it imposes the obligation of *tending* to perfection, i.e., of daily striving to acquire it; so that for a religious not to wish to advance, is to fail positively in the *duty of his state*.

21. In practice, what is this obligation to tend to perfection?

It is nothing else but the obligation to observe *the Rule*,[1] which offers: (1) the *vows* as *principal means*, and (2) the *rules* dealing in details as *secondary means* of tending to perfection.

***22. What do you understand by this *perfection* to which a religious should tend?**

Primarily and essentially it is the *perfection of charity*, which consists in *uniting oneself completely to the will of God, our last end.* But it is also the *perfection of the other virtues*, helpers and companions of charity, which the latter must bind together in perfect unity, as the Apostle says: "Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. iii, 14).

Since charity, which has *God alone* as its *motive*, has also

[1] The author rightly distinguishes between "the Rule"—*the sum-total of great guiding principles (for example, the Rule of St. Augustine)*, and "the rules" dealing in details. The latter are called "constitutions," at least in recent congregations.

our *neighbor* for its *object*, the duty of the religious is to tend to the perfection of that virtue in its two branches—the love of God and the love of the neighbor.

***23. How does one tend to this perfection in the religious state?**

As we have just said: by the vows and by the rules.

***24. Explain this in the case of the vows.**

First, by the voluntary privation of the objects of human desire, these three vows *remove* the three great *obstacles* to the reign of charity and of the virtues in our hearts: the vow of poverty goes against the desire of riches; the vow of chastity against the love of sensual pleasure; and the vow of obedience against the inordinate love of our own will and our own ideas.

Again, these same vows *relieve* the religious of the three great *cares* which withdraw men from tending toward God: the care arising from temporal possessions, that involved in the government of a family, and that often experienced in connection with the use of one's liberty.

Finally, this holocaust of the vows of religion is itself an *exercise* of perfect *charity*, for the religious thereby *sacrifices* to God all the goods which man can possess in this world: the external goods of fortune by the vow of poverty; the personal goods of the body by the vow of chastity;

and the internal goods of the soul by the vow of obedience.

Thus, these three vows are essential to the state of perfection, and the societies where they are not found are not religious institutes.[1]

***25. Explain how the rules help toward perfection.**

What is the purpose of all the rules? It is, on the one hand, to make clear the meaning of the three vows, to preserve them from all blemish, and to instil their spirit and positive perfection; on the other hand, it is to determine the exercise of charity and of the other virtues according to the end proper to each institute. The faithful observance of the holy rules is, therefore, an exercise of perfection even more continual and more lofty than an observance of the vows, in which one would confine oneself to avoiding sin.

26. Why do you add: *which they make according to the rule?*

Because the subject-matter of the three vows of religion is more or less comprehensive according to each institute. This is why it is of great importance for a religious to know exactly the meaning attached by the Rule to the vows he is to make in a certain order or congregation.

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[1] C. 673.

Chapter III

Various Kinds of Vows of Religion

27. Are all vows of religion of a single kind?

No. Among the vows of religion we distinguish *solemn* and *simple* vows; and simple vows may be either *perpetual* or *temporary*, according to what Holy Church has approved in different institutes.

28. What are *solemn* vows of religion? *Simple* vows?

Solemn vows are those to which a special approbation of the Church has attached particular effects (No. 29). All other vows are *simple*.[1]

Solemn vows are made only in *Orders* properly-so-called.[2]

The solemnity of the vows is not to be confused with the solemnity of the ceremonies.

29. What is the principal difference between

[1] C. 1308, §§ 1 and 2.
[2] C. 488, 2.

the effects of *simple* vows and those of *solemn* vows?

"The simple profession (i.e., the pronouncing of simple vows), temporary or perpetual, renders illicit acts which are contrary to the vows, but does not make such acts invalid save where an exception is expressly provided for; the solemn profession renders such acts also invalid, if they are capable of annulment."[1]

Examples: After the simple vow of poverty, if a religious gives away without permission a part of his patrimony, he commits a sin but the gift is valid. After the solemn vow, any gift made without permission is null; not only does the religious sin, but the recipient is bound to restitution.

A religious bound by the simple vow of chastity sins by marrying, but the marriage is valid. Marriage after solemn vows is null.

30. What kind of vows are made in religious congregations?

For wise reasons, suggested by Divine Wisdom, only *simple vows* are there made, and moreover these are sometimes only *temporary*. In the latter case, after the time fixed for the preparatory probation, the religious pronounces the three vows for a time according to the statutes of each congregation—for example, for one year—

[1] C. 579.

and on the expiration of that period he *renews* them, i.e., he *makes them anew*, with the consent of superiors.

Other congregations [1] have *perpetual* vows, and then the annual renovation is no more than a ceremony designed to renew in the religious the intention of being always more faithful in keeping them.[2]

***31. Would it not always be better to consecrate oneself to God by perpetual and even solemn vows?**

It is better for each one to hear the call of the Lord and answer it in all fidelity, generosity and steadfastness.

Undoubtedly perpetual and solemn vows are in themselves of greater value, since they sacrifice more and fix one more completely in the state of perfection; but each religious in his vocation must remember that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are various and that it is a real advantage as well as a duty for us to accept gratefully whatever

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[1] In all religious institutes where perpetual vows are made, these vows must be preceded by three years of temporary vows; another three years may be imposed by superiors. C. 574.

Bound by the same obligations (excepting sometimes the divine office) as after perpetual vows, the religious of temporary vows enjoys likewise the same indulgences and spiritual favors. Unless the constitutions determine otherwise, he cannot choose or be chosen for office, but the time fixed for the acquirement of these rights is reckoned beginning from the first vows. C. 578.

[2] If the first profession was invalid, the renovation of the vows does not remedy this defect automatically, but the subject must, after the disappearance of the impediment, be aware of the nullity of the preceding act and intend its rectification. C. 586, § 1.

He deigns to give us, and faithfully to promote its increase. Here, above all, nothing is more dangerous than fickleness and the temptation suggested by the enemy of our salvation under the pretext of greater perfection. Indeed, though God can call a soul still higher, and then the Church permits the change to a stricter observance,[1] the devil has too often used the illusion of higher perfection to work havoc with more than one religious vocation.

Furthermore, the religious should understand that he is in no wise called on to bring his vocation into question at each renovation of vows. For, to say nothing of the care he owes to his own spiritual welfare, the intention of his congregation in admitting him within its ranks and the favors which he has there received impose on him a certain obligation of stability.[2]

32. At what age can one be admitted validly to the vows of religion?

For the validity of the vows of religion, the Church, since the Council of Trent, requires: (1) sixteen years completed;[3] (2) one complete year of novitiate.[4]

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[1] At the present time, the Church favors very little the change from one religious institute to another, even to a "more strict" one. Permission of the Apostolic See is always required. C. 632.

[2] Except in special cases this is a question rather of urgent propriety than of rigorous obligation. C. 637: "A person who has made temporary vows may, at the expiration of the time specified, freely quit his religious institute; similarly, the institute can refuse him the renewal of temporary vows or the pronouncement of perpetual vows, for just and reasonable motives; sickness is not a sufficient cause except it be proved with certainty that the subject fraudulently failed to mention it or concealed it previous to the vows."

[3] For the pronouncement of perpetual vows, twenty-one years completed are required. Cc. 572 and 573.

[4] C. 555. The novitiate as well as the first vows must be made in the house of novitiate. C. 574.

By virtue of a decree of September 10, 1912, a novice in danger of death has the privilege of pronouncing his vows without specifying

In the case of each religious institute, we must see whether other conditions have been added to the above two.

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their duration. This act renders him capable of gaining the plenary indulgences and all the spiritual favors granted those who die after the vows. If the sick novice recovers, he is freed from all obligation; his first profession will be made just as that of other novices.

Chapter IV

The Virtues which Form the Object of the Three Vows of Religion

33. In the matter of poverty, chastity and obedience, is there not a distinction to be made between the *vow* and the *virtue?*

Yes, there are several differences here which merit the attention of the religious.

34. What is the first difference between the vow and the virtue?

The direct object of the vow is a self-imposed *privation*: e.g., one deprives oneself of the possession or the free use of temporal goods by the vow of poverty. The object of the virtue is the destruction of *inordinate affections*. The vow is therefore a *means* and the virtue the *end*. The virtue is in this respect something better than the vow, since the religious takes the vow in order to acquire the virtue more surely, more easily and more fully. Hence stands condemned the unhappy logic of those religious who, after

pronouncing their vows, shirk the religious virtues and remain more imperfect than many Christians in the world.

35. What is the second difference between the vow and the virtue?

Although the vow exerts an indirect influence on all acts of the virtue (No. 123), it does not extend directly beyond what it prescribes under pain of sin; the virtue can rise to an ever higher perfection. It is precisely by this growth in the virtue that we become fervent religious.

36. Is there not a third difference in favor of the vow?

Yes. If the vow is a means relative to the virtue, under another aspect the virtue is a means relative to the vow. Just as the vow helps to acquire the virtue, so the virtue helps to maintain the observance of the vow; for a notable shortcoming in the virtue imperils the vow itself, whose principle is weakened, and neglect of the virtue makes fidelity to the vow very difficult.

37. Can you point out a fourth difference between the vow and the virtue?

Yes, and this difference is the most noteworthy, since it is of concern even to the conscience. It

is possible in some cases to sin against the virtue without violating the vow (Nos. 81 and 130). But in general it is impossible to violate the vow without wounding by the same blow the virtue, which must above all be exercised in the matter imposed by the vow.[1]

38. Does not the pronouncement of the vows create another obligation in addition to that of the vows?

Yes, the pronouncement of the vows, by the mere fact of its being accepted by a religious body, makes of the subject who pronounces them a member of that same body, and consequently imposes on him the obligation of *submission to its superiors and rules.*

When a person enters any society, for instance, a club or an insurance association, he binds himself by at least a tacit contract to observe its statutes.

The pronouncement of the vows includes a contract creating more extended obligations—a *gift* which the religious makes of his person to the order or congregation which accepts him. By this gift he yields the rights which he has over himself and his acts, in order to be employed henceforth according to the Rule in the service of God, in view of which he has surrendered himself. The vows touch only the more essential duties of his contract; all the rest is determined by the rules and by the commands of superiors (Nos. 130–140). It is to be noted also that

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1 This does not mean that to the sin against the vow there is added every time a sin against the virtue. This is rarely true except with regard to chastity.

from this incorporation of subjects into a religious body by the pronouncement of the vows arise the duties of religious brotherhood and those of evangelical detachment from relatives.

39. Have novices any duties to fulfil in a religious community?

Their admission into the community creates for them three special obligations which regard, not the vows, but the religious virtues.

40. What is the first obligation of novices?

It is to follow their vocation, once it is known, and to do nothing which would put them in danger of losing it or of being rejected.[1]

41. What is the second obligation of novices?

It is to apply themselves to the study of the religious life and to acquire its holy habits by the practice of the virtues, especially of those which form the object of the three vows of religion.[2]

42. What is the third obligation of novices?

It is to observe the rules and to obey superiors. This obligation arises from the contract entered

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[1] Since the religious vocation is a matter of *counsel*, a person would not sin grievously in staying in the world unless he saw in this a serious danger of losing his soul.

Likewise, the novice is free to leave. He can be dismissed for a just cause by superiors, without their being obliged to tell him the reason for the action. C. 571, § 1.

[2] C. 565.

into at least tacitly between themselves and the institute by the mere fact of their admittance. This has the nature of a first gift, which, offered and accepted, begins to make of the novice a member of the religious family. It secures advantages for the novice, while at the same time it creates duties for him.

This third obligation is analogous to that of religious, and consequently what we shall say of the virtue of obedience should also claim the attention of novices.[1]

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[1] C. 561, § 2.

PART II

THE THREE VOWS OF RELIGION IN PARTICULAR

Chapter I

Religious Poverty

ARTICLE I

THE VOW OF POVERTY

Section 1.—Matter and Extent of the Vow of Poverty

43. What does a religious renounce by his *vow of poverty?*

It is impossible to answer this question satisfactorily by a general reply, because the vow of poverty has a greater or less extent and imposes obligations more or less strict according to the

differences of religious institutes. And it is not always greater or less fervor which gives rise to these differences; they may be accounted for by variety of purpose, ministry, etc.

Hence we must consult the Rule of each order or congregation in order to state accurately the meaning and extent of the vow made therein.

The solemn vow of poverty sacrifices the *right of proprietorship* (No. 45), strips the religious of all personal goods and renders him incapable of acquiring them (by gift, legacy, inheritance, etc.). Such acquisition or any act of proprietorship is not only blameworthy, but also invalid (No. 29).

The simple vow leaves more or less intact the right to possess and to acquire (e.g., by inheritance), but it forbids any *act of proprietorship* (No. 46), even with regard to personal goods. The religious cannot dispose of these except with the permission of a competent superior. Without that permission the act, though valid, is illicit. This holds unless otherwise provided in the constitutions.

44. What is the essence of the vow of poverty?

The vow of poverty consists essentially in *depriving* oneself, to please God, of either the *right* and the *act*, or at least the *act of proprietorship*.

45. What do you understand by the right of proprietorship?

By the right of proprietorship I understand the right to possess or to acquire for oneself any temporal goods whatever.

46. What do you understand by the act of proprietorship?

By the act of proprietorship I understand the *independent* disposal of temporal goods or of any object having a money value.[1]

47. What does the *matter of the vow* of poverty ordinarily include in a simple congregation?

It includes:

1. All goods and objects which do not belong to the religious strictly as his own, and especially those belonging to the community or the house.

2. What he himself has given to the congregation, as his outfit, etc., since he no longer has dominion over these things once the community has accepted them.[2]

3. All gifts and presents which may be given him by way of gratitude, affection or alms, because all these go by right to the community.

4. For the same reason, the product of his labor and industry, whatever it be, if it has a money value.

The religious will here note two things: first, how much he must be on his guard against the illusions of cupidity,

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[1] Under date of July 13, 1913, the Congregation of Religious declared that religious have not the proprietorship of their *manuscripts* to the extent of being free, without authorization, to give them away or to alienate them in any other manner.

[2] If a novice leaves a religious institute, he may take away with him anything that he brought which has not been destroyed by use. C. 570, § 2.

which looks on these goods as if they belonged to him; secondly, with what fidelity he must, when he has occasion, keep his *accounts* and render them to his superiors.

5. Finally, the very goods which belong to him: to dispose of them he must have the superior's permission (or at least render him an account, if the constitutions demand nothing more) (No. 58).

Section 2.—Violation of the Vow of Poverty

48. According to the above explanations, when does a religious *sin against the vow* of poverty?

A religious fails in his vow of poverty when he assumes possession of any object which comes under the matter of the vow, or when he disposes of it as if he were a *proprietor*, i.e., independently of the will of the superior.

49. Give a more detailed explanation of this important doctrine.

The principal sins against the vow of poverty are:

1. To appropriate what belongs to another.
2. To retain possession of any object whatever.
3. To give or to receive.
4. To buy, sell or exchange.
5. To lend or borrow.

6. To use an object for a purpose other than that prescribed.

7. To destroy it or allow it to perish.

8. To carry it away with one to another house.

9. To dispose of one's own goods without the permission of the superior.

Sin may also be committed against the vow by *interior* acts directly opposed to the vow, e.g., by consenting to the desire of violating it, and according to the common teaching, in using things which are *certainly superfluous*, for which superiors cannot grant legitimate permission (No. 68).

This notion of the superfluous, elastic and variable as it is, is determined by the purpose, constitutions or customs of individual religious institutes.

A piece of furniture which is superfluous for a Trappist is not such in a teaching congregation; differences of the same kind may be met with in the matter of clothing, books, food, etc.

50. Give some explanation of the first of these cases.

It is a violation of the vow of poverty *to appropriate to oneself* anything whatever belonging to another, since this is against the Seventh Commandment of God. The same thing is true if one *takes for oneself or another*, without permission, an object belonging to the house; and the sin

is ordinarily more grave when the object taken is destroyed by use. It is to be noted, moreover, that theft committed against a religious house assumes the character of *sacrilege*.[1]

51. Explain the second case.

It is a violation of the vow of poverty to *retain* possession of an object, personally or through another, without permission, especially to keep it in a spirit of proprietorship and as if one were master of it, e.g., when one hides it from superiors in order that they may not take it away.

To retain certain objects (books, etc.) beyond the time fixed, without this spirit of ownership, is generally not a grave fault.

52. Explain the third case.

It is against the vow of poverty to *give* or to *receive* without permission.[2] In exceptional circumstances, it is not forbidden to accept a thing conditionally in virtue of a presumed permission (No. 75), and with the intention of later obtaining authorization to keep it. But in general, the alms or gifts made to a religious are to be given to the superior, who will distribute them to the community according to the needs of individuals.

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[1] All money belonging to the community, as well as all securities, are to be placed in the common fund. C 594, § 2.

[2] There is no question here of gifts which augment the patrimony of the religious of simple vows. (Nos. 43 and 85.)

When there is question of receiving for the community and in its name, permission can ordinarily be presumed, especially if the superior is absent. Indeed an arbitrary refusal on the part of a religious might be a fault against charity, since without good reason it deprives the community of something which is offered to it.

When, as sometimes happens, a religious is living alone, he may give alms to the poor according to his means, repay a favor by some suitable present, and make certain small gifts of piety. This he will do in accord with the practice of his institute and the intentions of superiors, to whom he will render an account (No. 47, 4).

53. Explain the fourth case.

It is against the vow of poverty to *sell*, *buy* or *exchange*, on one's own authority, anything belonging to the community, even in the interest of the house; or to sell and buy under conditions other than those prescribed by the superior.

54. Explain the fifth case.

It is an infringement of the vow of poverty to *lend* or *borrow* a thing without permission, whether the lending or borrowing *transfers the dominion*, as happens in the case of money, or *confers only the use*, since this is also an act of proprietorship. Nevertheless, the fault is not serious if there is question merely of use, pro-

vided one is sure that the object will be returned. The fault is still less when such lending is done within the community; there is even no fault whatever if legitimate custom authorizes such action (No. 77).

In these little mutual loans, we must avoid at once the carelessness of laxity and squeamishness or rudeness—for instance, when a fellow-religious asks for something, charity should generally lead us to suppose that he has permission; at least, we should be wrong in wounding his feelings by questioning him on the matter without sufficient reason.

Under this head comes the prohibition against accepting a *deposit*,[1] and giving *security*, without formal permission. The vow does not forbid accepting money or other objects for distribution according to the intention and express determination of the giver—in carrying out the will of the latter concerning such things, one does not dispose of them independently, as a proprietor. But the rule may wisely require that one have permission.

55. Explain the sixth case.

It is an act of proprietorship and a breach of the vow of poverty to *make use of things for other*

[1] It is the opinion of some reliable authorities that unless the constitutions prescribe otherwise, the deposit is not contrary to the vow if the object deposited is not used without the permission of the owner and of the superior.

purposes than those determined by the superior (allowance being made for legitimate customs or permissions rightly presumed); thus money given to religious to be used in fulfilling certain offices or for travelling cannot be applied to another use without permission; consequently what is left over must be returned to the superior.

56. Explain the seventh case.

It is against the vow of poverty to *destroy* [1] an object wilfully, or to *allow it to perish or deteriorate* through negligence. A religious assigned to the kitchen, the store-room, the wardrobe, etc., can sin, even grievously in the case—rather rare, however—of serious and conscious neglect. Moreover, all religious should be at least as careful of the articles given for their use as they would have been of their own goods in the world.

57. Explain the eighth case.

It is against the vow of poverty to *carry away* from one house to another, in changing residence, more than what is permitted by superiors or by lawful custom (No. 77 and following).

58. Explain the ninth case.

Finally, the vow of poverty forbids to the

[1] To destroy solely for the sake of injury is certainly not to perform the act of a proprietor, hence certainly not a sin against the vow; but it is against charity and justice.

religious the *independent* administration or use of his personal goods.

Before the simple vows, the novice must hand over to a person of his choice the administration of his possessions, and except where the constitutions decide otherwise, determine the disposition (use and usufruct) of his income.

These steps may be taken even after the simple vows with regard to anything additional acquired during that time.

The arrangements made cannot be changed without permission of the superior general, except where otherwise provided by the constitutions, and no change—at least, no notable change—can be made in favor of the institute.[1]

59. What are the obligations of superiors relative to the vow of poverty?

With regard to themselves, superiors, having made the same vow as the other religious, have the same obligations in what concerns them personally. Likewise, in the administration and disposal of the goods of the institute, they may not act as proprietors and masters, but only as instruments of higher authority and comformably to the Rule.[2]

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[1] Cc. 569 and 580.

[2] Superiors will find the rules for administration in Cc. 531–537; regarding dowries, in Cc. 547–551.

Violations on their part are special in this, that in addition to the personal sin against the vow, they ordinarily involve a sin of *scandal.*

With regard to their inferiors, superiors themselves violate the vow of poverty if they permit or grant what they have no right to grant or permit, and such authorization is null (No. 65 and following).

It is, moreover, a blameworthy connivance on the part of the superior to tolerate in his inferiors infractions of the vow which he can prevent.

60. What is the amount required for a mortal sin against the vow of poverty?

Generally speaking, it is the same as that required for a mortal sin against the Seventh Commandment of God;[1] when a religious disposes of his personal goods, a greater amount is required.

61. In violating his vow, cannot a religious also sin against *justice* and consequently be obliged to restitution?

Yes, undoubtedly, any theft and any culpable damage done by a religious against his neighbor

[1] Serious matter against the vow varies a great deal according to the more or less strict poverty professed by the various institutes, and according to the plenty or want of the community. It is therefore impossible to settle upon a definite figure here; each one must consult his constitutions or his superiors. In their doubts, superiors will ask the advice of approved theologians.

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or the community is against *justice*, and then he is obliged to *restitution*, even toward the community. He must therefore make compensation for the injustice he has done the house, either from his personal goods, or by living more economically, or by extra work if he is capable of it, or he may obtain a condonation from superiors.

Section 3.—Permission which Prevents Violation of the Vow of Poverty; Custom

§1. Permission

62. Why does *permission* prevent a fault against the vow?

Because it excludes the act of proprietorship forbidden by the vow. The religious no longer acts as the owner of the thing in question, but as the instrument and simple executor of the superior's will.[1]

63. Does every permission protect from sin?

No, only a legitimate permission.

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[1] Note: (1) that a permission given without limitation of time (expressed or understood) of itself holds indefinitely; (2) but that any permission can be revoked (suppressed) by the one who gave it, his superior or his successor.

64. Explain this matter well, since it concerns obedience as much as poverty.

There are several kinds of permission: *valid* or *invalid, licit* or *illicit, express* or *tacit, particular* or *general,* and *presumed.*

65. What is valid, and what invalid permission?

Valid permission is that which the superior has the right to grant; *null* or *invalid* permission is that which goes beyond his power.

66. What is to be said of null or invalid permission?

In the matter of poverty, the superior who gives an invalid permission himself sins against the vow, and the inferior who uses it also sins if he is aware of its nullity.

A permission obtained through fraud or on false grounds is an invalid permission. It does not excuse the inferior from sin against the vow of poverty.

67. What do you understand by licit and by illicit permission?

A permission is *licit* when it is given for just cause; it is *illicit* if given without sufficient reason, even by competent authority.

68. What have you to remark concerning illicit permission?

Illicit permission shields the superior who gives it and the inferior who uses it from sin against the vow, but the superior fails in the duty of his state and the inferior sins, at least venially, by acting in an inordinate manner. In doubtful cases the inferior may ask the permission and after obtaining it should suppose that his superior has had a sufficient reason for giving it.

A *legitimate* permission is therefore one which is at once *valid* and *licit*.

It is not permissible for superiors themselves to make, or to allow their inferiors to make expenditures on luxuries, on superfluities, and on purchases contrary to the spirit of the Rule for clothing or furniture.[1]

69. What is an express permission?

Permission is *express* or *formal* when the superior formally expresses his will to grant permission.

70. What do you think of formal or express permission?

Evidently it is the surest of all, when it is at the same time valid and licit.

71. What is tacit, and what implicit permission?

Tacit permission is that which the superior gives

[1] C. 594, § 3 disapproves of luxury in the matter of furniture.

by his mere silence, in circumstances where silence is equivalent to consent.

Implicit permission is included in an express permission: if you are given permission for a journey, you are given implicit permission to make the expenditures necessary for that journey.

72. Can a religious act with a safe conscience on a tacit or an implicit permission?

Such permission is sufficient, provided one has good reason to think that it exists and does not give it a false interpretation.

73. What is particular, and what general permission?

Particular permission is that which the superior gives to one person and for one case; *general* permission is that which he gives to several persons or for several cases.

74. What have you to say of general permission?

General permission is legitimate, but it becomes illicit if it tends to the weakening of religious discipline (No. 139).

75. What is presumed permission, and what is its value?

Presumed permission is that which is supposed to exist in the will of the superior, because one

judges reasonably that *it would be granted if asked.* This permission is often open to suspicion; it is even worthless when wrongly supposed through an inordinate affection, or when the superior is willing to grant the permission only on condition of its being asked. Permission presumed in good faith suffices in cases where it is impossible or difficult to have recourse to the superior. It is even our duty to use it if we are persuaded that the superior would wish that we presume it, e.g., in order not to lose a good opportunity.

76. What is the means of assuring ourselves that we are not wrongly presuming permission?

A good presumed permission is one in which the inferior, setting aside all self-love, puts himself honestly in thought before the will of the superior and then does exactly what he judges the superior would tell him to do. Even in case he later sees that he was mistaken, he has not offended God.

§2. Custom

(Under tacit and general permission is to be placed the matter of *legitimate custom.*)

77. What do you understand here by *custom?*

Custom in general is *an unwritten practice which is introduced little by little into a community,*

either by way of interpretation or by way of modification of some point of the Rule. Legitimately established, custom has the force of true law, as well to forbid as to allow; if not legitimate, it has no value.

78. When is a custom legitimate?

A custom is not legitimate except under three conditions: (1) it must be reasonable; (2) it must really exist in the greater part of the community; (3) it must have lasted for a sufficient time (forty years are now required) without competent authority ever having protested.[1]

ARTICLE II

THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY

Section 1.—The Virtue of Poverty

***79. What is the virtue of poverty?**

It is an evangelical virtue which inclines the heart of the Christian to detach itself from affection for temporal goods.[2]

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[1] Cc. 25–28. Among customs contrary to the Code, some are here formally disapproved, and these must be suppressed. Others cannot be tolerated by Bishops unless such customs are century-old or immemorial. C. 4.

[2] Is poverty a *special* virtue, or is its object indistinguishable from that of other virtues? We do not intend to discuss this controverted question.

***80. Is it specially recommended to religious?**

Most assuredly. Exterior poverty, which they have vowed, has for its purpose to facilitate for them *interior* detachment, which is the object of the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

81. What is to be thought of interior faults of religious against poverty?

Some of them are sins against the vow (No. 49). Others are simple imperfections, unless blameworthy for some other reason; an attachment to some temporal good is an imperfection, but sometimes becomes a venial sin as a result of its inordinate motive—for example, vanity or gluttony. If strong enough to endanger the vow or some other obligation, an attachment is sinful to a more or less grievous degree according to the gravity of the danger. As is evident, only feelings wilfully entertained can be sinful.

82. Point out a duty arising from the vow, but wherein the spirit of poverty is specially exercised.

Such is the *common life*, which becomes for every religious the source of much merit.

83. What do you understand by the common life?

The *common life* in a religious house consists in this, that each one, not excepting superiors, must be content with what is given to all in the matter of food, clothing, furniture, etc., without the least privilege in favor of any one, and without any exception which is not really necessary.[1]

Common life is a prime factor in the conservation of the religious spirit. Hence superiors are obliged to maintain it with solicitude and firmness, and inferiors cannot show too much earnestness and delicacy in observing it.

Let us add two remarks: (1) superiors cannot demand the common life except to the extent that they themselves fittingly provide for the necessities of everyone; (2) an exception dictated by good reasons, of which however the superior is the legitimate judge, is not contrary to the common life.

84. Point out what is most injurious to common life.

The most fatal breach of the common life is the use of "*peculia.*" By "peculium" is meant a sum of money coming either from the possessions of the religious or by way of gifts received, for instance, from relatives, the free use of which money the superior consents to leave to the religious. This abuse, which leads to the ruin of the spirit of poverty, is also most harmful to fraternal union and to edification. It is even

[1] The Code insists on the common life (C. 594, § 1), especially in houses of study (C. 587, § 2); those who fail seriously in it are to be deprived of the right to elect or to be elected for office (C. 2389).

against the vow if the superior renounces the right to revoke the permission, or if he gives a permission which is invalid and contrary to the constitutions.

Section 2.—The Distribution which a Religious Makes of His Goods

85. What are the prescriptions of the Code in this matter?

1. Renunciation of their possessions by *novices* is *invalid* (C. 568).

In congregations of simple vows, before the temporary vows, novices are to dispose of their present and future possessions, with complete liberty, by *testament* (C. 569, § 3).

2. *After the simple vows*:

This testament of the novice cannot be modified without the consent of the Holy See or, in case of urgency, that of a competent superior (C. 583, 2°).

The religious, unless the constitutions provide otherwise, keeps the proprietorship of his goods and the capacity to acquire more (C. 580, § 1); he is forbidden to relinquish this proprietorship by gift or gratuitous deed of conveyance (donatio inter vivos) (C. 583, 1°).

What he acquires by his industry (labor, skill, etc.) or by reason of his membership in his institute is acquired for that institute (C. 580, § 2).

3. Within the *sixty days* which precede the *solemn* vows, in the absence of an indult to the contrary, the religious *must renounce* all his actual possessions in favor of whomsoever he wishes (C. 581).

4. All that he acquires *after* the solemn vows (e.g., by gift, inheritance, etc.) is acquired for the Order, if it is capable of possessing (C. 582).

***86. What is the fitting way for a religious to strip himself of his goods?**

To follow the counsel of Jesus Christ, it is fitting (not of strict obligation) *to give them to the poor*, i.e., to apply them to works that are pious and pleasing to God. After satisfying obligations which may be imposed by justice, filial piety, gratitude and public edification, let him dispose of the rest of his goods according to his own devotion, *seeking sincerely the Divine good pleasure.* In cases which are doubtful or liable to the illusions of self-love, it is most prudent to consult an enlightened and disinterested adviser.

Section 3.—Advantages and Practice of Religious Poverty

***87. What are the advantages and the value of religious poverty?**

Two things bring its excellence well to light:

1. It is called *the wall of religion*, i.e., it is its *foundation* and *rampart*, as well for the whole body as for each of its members.

2. It is a rich source of merit when one acquires its spirit well and observes faithfully its holy refinements. And so Our Saviour has promised to it, *with the hundredfold in this life*, not only *the heritage of life eternal*, but in addition *a treasure in heaven.*

***88. Indicate briefly its *practice* and its *degrees* of perfection.**

In the *exterior practice* of religious poverty: the *first degree* is really to renounce all temporal goods and to dispose of nothing independently of the superior; this is even the matter of the vow.

A *second degree* is to be content with what is necessary, to put aside all inordinate affection as well as all superfluity in things that have to do with one's maintenance; this is the principal subject-matter of the virtue.

A *third degree* is to seek the worst things in the community and to accept such as our part, in what concerns dwelling, clothing, etc.

A *fourth degree* is to love to be in want, even sometimes of what is necessary, but with prudence and without danger to health, and to rejoice when Jesus Christ Our Lord lets us share His poverty.

In its *interior practice*, a religious who has the spirit of poverty will accustom himself to regard as consecrated to God all that belongs to the community and even what is given for his own use.

He will cling to nothing and will be ever ready to let himself be deprived of everything.

He will like to look upon himself as a poor man, who, living on alms, receives all things gratefully without complaining at an occasional refusal.

Finally, he will practice the privation of all temporal goods and of the ease they bring with them. This he will do by way of mortification and penance, in expiation of his sins, in contempt of the goods of earth and to secure the goods of heaven, through love of Jesus Christ, His Divine King, and through the desire to resemble Him in poverty, and in order that all his affections may be undividedly Christ's.

Chapter II

Religious Chastity

ARTICLE I

THE VOW AND THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

89. To what does a religious bind himself by his vow of chastity?

He imposes on himself two obligations: (1) to forego marriage; (2) to avoid every exterior or interior act already forbidden *by the Sixth or the Ninth Commandment of God.*

The vow of chastity adds a new obligation to that of these two commandments, and if the religious violates his vow he commits a second sin—*of sacrilege*—which he must also declare in confession, unless the confessor already knows that he is bound by vow. Moreover, the exterior fault frequently involves a third sin—*of scandal*—which assails the religious institute and religious charity by branding the whole religious community with the infamy attached to this sort of sin.

90. Is every infraction of the virtue of chastity also a violation of the vow?

Yes, and here no distinction is to be made.

91. Is every sin against chastity a mortal sin?

Yes, if one directly seeks impure pleasure or accepts it willingly. This gravity is found not only in exterior acts but also in interior complacencies and bad desires, when they are *completely deliberate and voluntary.*

92. Is every bad thought blameworthy?

In order that it be blameworthy, there must be attention of mind and consent of will.

In order that it be a mortal sin, it is necessary: (1) that it be of a nature to cause of itself impure pleasure; (2) that there be full attention; (3) and at the same time full consent.

If one of these conditions is imperfectly verified, the sin is venial.

We may have two sorts of bad thoughts: those which come from our own will and which we recall or entertain freely through affection for evil; and those which come from the enemy of salvation or from an evil inclination which is in us, in spite of ourselves. The first belong to us, and we are responsible for them before Him Who reads the depths of our hearts; the second do not belong to us and we are not responsible for them, as long as we do not want them, do not consent to them, try to exclude them. Nor is this all, by any means: for if we resist a bad thought, far from offending God we have the merit of victory—a merit all the greater the more obstinate the temptation.

The same is to be said of the bad impressions which may be felt in the senses. We shall have to answer for those only which we have directly caused, or in which

the will has taken a free part; but those which we disclaim with all our heart can in no way render us blameworthy—they even afford us an exercise of virtue by the horror which they cause us and by the anxiety with which they make us have recourse to God.

93. In addition to sins directly contrary to chastity, are there not others which also wound it, at least indirectly?

Yes, such are the interior or exterior acts which lead to a fall or expose us to it by reason of our weakness.

Of this sort are the liberties which one gives one's thoughts or senses, and which become *sins more or less grave according as they create a more or less proximate danger* of consenting to a sin of impurity.

Some of these liberties are venial sins if they create a remote danger; they are not blameworthy at all if exercised with prudence for a reasonable cause, for instance, to perform for oneself or for those who are sick acts called for by cleanliness or hygiene. This, of course, holds under two conditions: (1) that one in no way act *with the intention* of procuring the forbidden pleasure; (2) that one take no voluntary pleasure in the bad impression, if it is aroused.

94. Give some clear information on this delicate matter—first, regarding exterior acts.

As regards the eyes, we must avoid: immodesty, too free looks, dangerous reading, unhealthy curiosity.

The ears: pleasure in listening to what is unbecoming, in accepting flattery, compliments which are open to suspicion and expressions of too warm affection.

The tongue: words of double meaning, of doubtful decency, too affectionate, whether spoken or written; worldly and profane songs, much more reprehensible on lips consecrated to God.

The touch: imprudences regarding one's own person, too much comfort-seeking, loose and sensual bodily positions; with regard to the neighbor, familiarities, fondling and other signs of sensual affection. These things are always very dangerous, especially if they arise from an ill-regulated attachment.

95. Add some information regarding interior acts.

Interior acts include the recollections of the *memory* or the seductive representations entertained in the *imagination*, even before there is direct complacence of the will in the evil itself. Finally, as concerns the *heart*, too tender affections and sensual friendships.

A religious should hold all these things in aversion as being full of danger for him and already compromising more or less gravely the angelic virtue.

96. Cannot an act which seems less culpable in a person of the world become a grave sin in a religious?

Yes, on account of the scandal; this is often the case with doubtful or suspicious relations had between persons of opposite sex.

ARTICLE II

MEANS OF PRESERVING RELIGIOUS CHASTITY INTACT

***97. What must we do in interior temptations?**

We must take up at once *the buckler of faith,* i.e., recall vividly the presence of God, implore His aid with confidence, and then fight the temptation resolutely and without anxiety.

On this field, victorious combat often consists in fleeing the enemy by timely distraction, or better still, by applying oneself to the duties of one's state without even deigning to notice the temptation. Thus the traveller goes his way calmly, undisturbed by the barking of curs.

98. Is not something more necessary in exterior temptations?

It is further indispensable to flee the *occasion* of sin, and it is often a grave duty to inform superiors.

***99. What are the necessary preservatives for chastity?**

They can be reduced to seven: guard over the senses, avoidance of idleness, avoidance of occasions, promptness in repelling temptation, care in avoiding sensual friendships, temperance, and openness of conscience. We may add to these the measures of prudence prescribed by the Church for all religious in the matters of the habit, enclosure (even in congregations), going out of the house, life outside.[1]

***100. Explain the first preservative.**

The first preservative is guard over the senses, and especially restraint of the eyes; for the Holy Ghost warns us that our senses are the windows of the soul, by which death easily enters.

***101. What is the second preservative?**

The second is the shunning of self-indulgence and idleness. Do not be an idler or a dreamer. *Let the enemy find you always busy* and his temptations will be rare or powerless.

***102. In what does the third preservative consist?**

It consists in avoiding occasions; for according

[1] See C. 596 and following.

to the Wise Man, "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 2). For a religious, it is a duty to fly contact with the world except in case of real necessity; he there would be perhaps more exposed and more vulnerable than seculars. For a stronger reason he should be faithful to the precautions enjoined by the Rule, especially concerning relations with persons of the other sex.

***103. What is the fourth preservative?**

The fourth is promptness in suppressing temptation. We shake off a live coal as soon as we feel it—otherwise it burns and starts a blaze. Similarly, it is easier by far to get rid of a first impression than of one which has already entered deep into the soul.

***104. What is the fifth preservative?**

It is to keep one's heart free from too human affections and to shun sensual friendships—for even those wherein one sees no evil commence by softening the soul and soon enkindle concupiscence.

***105. The sixth preservative?**

The sixth is to shun all intemperance, especially in drinking.

***106. The seventh?**

The seventh, and the one deserving of strongest recommendation because it assures the use of all the others, is to have always the utmost candor of soul and the most perfect sincerity in dealing with our spiritual guides, i.e., with the confessor and the superior.[1]

***107. Can you point out still other efficacious means of better preserving oneself in purity?**

Yes, here are six more means of protecting the angelic virtue:

1. Humility, which makes us fear praise and avoid affectation in dress and bearing, keeps the soul in distrust of self, and thus draws down the divine help without which no one can be chaste. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (James iv, 6).

2. The love of mortification and prayer. "This kind (of demon)," says Our Lord, "is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." Matt. xvii, 20).

3. The exact observance of the rules of modesty.

4. Fidelity to all the other rules and to the duties of one's state. In this way the soul sustains

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[1] No religious superior has the right to influence his inferiors to manifest their consciences to him, but voluntary self-manifestation is still permitted; when the superior is a priest, it is recommended, even for the most intimate difficulties. C. 530.

herself in energy, and according to the words of our Saviour, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater." (Luke xvi, 10).

5. A great devotion to Mary, the Queen and special Protectress of virgins.

6. Above all, Holy Communion, as frequent and as fervent as possible.

ARTICLE III

ADVANTAGES OF RELIGIOUS CHASTITY

***108. What are the advantages of religious chastity?**

We can here point out only what the Holy Doctors, vying with each other, have said of it. By chastity, the religious, according to St. Paul, is freed from the solicitudes of the world and of family life; there remains to him but one care on earth—to please the Lord—and his heart is no longer divided in its affections.

By chastity he lives in this place of exile as the angels live in heaven. He enjoys the happiness promised to the pure of heart, the beatitude of seeing God and tasting Him in Communion and prayer. His soul knows a liberty and a *peace which surpasses all understanding,* in place

of that tyranny, that remorse and disquiet to which corrupt and faithless hearts are a prey.

Through chastity the religious soul has the inestimable honor of being the spouse of Jesus Christ, the King of kings.

Through chastity she becomes, like Mary, the mother, according to the spirit, of numerous children; God blesses superabundantly her zeal, and the weight of her virtue gives to her words and works a special efficacy.

Finally, through chastity religious honor in a singular way the Holy Catholic Church, our Mother, whose ornament and glory in them especially, as in priests, is this celestial virtue.

Chapter III

Religious Obedience

ARTICLE I

THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

Section 1.—Pre-eminence of This Vow over the Other Two

***109. What esteem should a religious have for the vow of obedience?**

He should regard it as the principal of the three vows of religion, as that which has pre-eminence over the other two and is the most necessary to the religious state.

***110. Why has the vow of obedience pre-eminence over the other two?**

Because the religious by his vow of obedience offers and consecrates to God the inmost goods of the soul and consequently the most precious of his possessions—his own will with the other

powers which depend upon it; and since religious obedience extends to every detail of one's whole life, it is a holocaust or perfect sacrifice.

***111. Why is the vow of obedience the most necessary to the religious state?**

Because it is the vow of obedience which properly constitutes the *religious body*, in giving it the perfection of its unity and all its power. What would an army be without discipline?

Section 2.—Obligations of the Vow of Obedience

112. To what does a religious bind himself by the vow of obedience?

He promises God to obey his legitimate superiors[1] *in all that they command according to the Rule.*

113. Explain the words: *in all that superiors command.*

In order to understand well the duties of religious obedience in general, we must distinguish in superiors a triple power to command.

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[1] Besides the superiors of each institute, the following can command in virtue of the vow of obedience: the Pope (as well as the Roman Congregations), for all religious; the Bishop, for members of diocesan congregations.

114. What is the first power found in a religious body?

The first power is that which the Church, i.e., the Pope, or at least the Bishop, has conferred on the founder of the order or congregation to impose the *Rule* and the constitutions, and on the superiors of the same body to add thereto statutes and rules.

It is in virtue of this power that obedience is due to the constitutions, the statutes and the rules.

115. What is the second power of commanding found in superiors?

The second power, likewise consecrated by the Church, resembles the *paternal power* in the family. It is that which superiors have as heads of the religious family to enjoin on their inferiors whatever is within the limits of the Rule, and thus to regulate their acts for the service of God and the good of the community.

This second power may even be communicated to delegates, and then the latter must be obeyed as superiors themselves, *according to the measure of authority confided to them.*

These first two powers exist *even independently* of the vow of obedience; this is why novices also are subject to them.

Every member of a society is bound to observe its laws and to obey legitimate authority in it. An adopted child must obey his adoptive father and conform himself to the customs of his newly-found family.

The first two powers consecrated by the Church are therefore founded on the nature of all human societies.

116. What is the third power possessed by superiors?

The third power, likewise sanctioned by the Church, but more special and sacred than the others, *results from the vow of obedience.* When a religious makes this vow to God, he imposes on himself a much more strict and grave obligation to obey the superior every time the latter commands in virtue of this same vow.[1]

117. What is the meaning of those further words: *according to the Rule?*

They mean that superiors have the right to command both what is found expressly in the Rule and what may be contained implicitly therein. Such are penances for transgressions, proper means for procuring its observance, ways of efficiently carrying out assigned works, and anything which has to do with good administration.

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[1] For the sake of completeness, a fourth power, that of participation in ecclesiastical *jurisdiction*, should be mentioned; but this concerns only superiors of the exempt orders of men (Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, etc.).

But superiors cannot command, I do not say only what is sinful—even venially, but moreover what is evidently contrary to the institute or outside the duties which it imposes. In case of doubt, however, the inferior is bound to obey, but he may have recourse to higher authority.

118. What is precisely the matter of the vow of obedience?

The exact matter of the vow of obedience is that in commanding which the superior *declares that he wishes to oblige the religious in virtue of his vow.* Any other injunction of a superior derives its obligation from the second power explained above and forms the object, not of the *vow,* but of the *virtue* of obedience (No. 129).[1]

119. How does the superior declare his will to oblige in virtue of the vow?

By these formulæ: "*In virtue of holy obedience*" or, "*In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and others of like nature.

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[1] Some reliable authors see a small fault against the vow in disobedience to simple injunctions of superiors in institutes where these injunctions oblige under pain of venial sin (No. 130).

Ordinarily, formal contempt of authority is judged contrary to the vow (No. 131, 1); some add to this the case where considerable damage results from disobedience.

120. When does one sin mortally against the vow of obedience?

One sins mortally against the vow of obedience whenever one disobeys, in grave matter, a command of a superior imposed after the above fashion, in particular or in general, by spoken word or in writing, immediately or through the agency of another.

In non-grievous matter, the superior cannot oblige under pain of mortal sin, even in virtue of the vow; but in religious communities a matter slight in itself can become serious by reason of the common interest, the end to be attained or other circumstances.

121. Has every superior the right to command in virtue of obedience?

This depends on the constitutions. Ordinarily this power is confided only to major superiors and to the highest superior of the house. There are congregations where even the latter does not possess the right or possesses it only with wise restrictions.

122. How should a superior use the right of commanding in virtue of the vow of obedience?

He should have recourse to it only with great prudence, very rarely, and for really grave reasons.

***123. But does it not follow from this that the religious rarely has the merit of the vow of obedience?**

No, because the vow always really dominates all acts of religious obedience, even when there is no actual question of its violation. The same is true of the other vows.

This truth is proved by several reasons:

1. The religious, having made himself dependent in all things on the superior, is well aware in obeying that the latter can always use his right to oblige in conscience, and thus he observes the vow by anticipating, so to speak, its obligation.

2. Every time he submits himself to the will of the superior, he does it in view of his vow, out of the respect and love he has for it, and to ward off all danger of failing in it when the superior wishes to have recourse to the right it gives him.

3. The observance of the vows can be compared to that of the Commandments of God. In doing, in the same matter, more than they prescribe under pain of sin, we observe them with more perfection and merit.

124. Does the simple vow of obedience produce on the will of the religious the same effect as the solemn vow?

No. The simple vow, it is true, renders *illicit* for the religious any obligation contracted by him without the consent of the superior; but *of itself* it does not render it *invalid*, although the superior has the right to annul it. The solemn

vow involves such an abdication of the will that the religious can no longer contract, even *validly*, any obligation either natural or civil, except as the instrument or agent of the superior.[1]

125. What is the difference between the vow of obedience of the religious and the promise of obedience made by the newly-ordained priest in the hands of his Bishop at ordination?

There are two considerable differences:

1. The clerical promise is not a *vow* made to God, but a *simple promise* in which the newly-ordained priest recognizes before the Church and accepts the right which the Bishop has just acquired over him by ordination.

2. The vow of obedience subjects to the superior the *whole life* and *all the acts* of the religious, according to the *whole extent* of the Rule. The clerical promise subjects the newly-ordained priest to his Bishop only in things depending on ecclesiastical jurisdiction, such as the canonical distribution of functions, the manner of exercising them, and the duties of the clerical life.

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[1] This theory of Suarez and Father Cotel on the effect of the solemn vow of obedience is rejected by other trustworthy writers. We are in no way obliged to hold it as certain.

ARTICLE II

THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE

***126. What is the virtue of obedience?**

It is a virtue which, as St. Thomas teaches, comes under the head of *justice*, and which inclines the will to subject itself to legitimate superiors as to the representatives of the authority of God.

***127. Is the virtue of obedience very necessary for a religious?**

He needs it to escape the snares of the devil and the illusions of self-love, for his direction in the way of perfection, and to avoid losing much merit.

***128. Does the virtue of obedience extend beyond the vow?**

Yes, it can produce a much greater number of acts than have been promised by the vow, and with much greater interior perfection.

***129. In what matter is the virtue of obedience exercised in the religious state?**

In the religious state, the virtue of obedience

is exercised in all the general or particular prescriptions made by superiors according to the Rule. This includes, on the one hand, the constitutions, the statutes and the rules; and on the other, the injunctions, desires, requests or counsels of those in authority.

Since the superior is the representative of God, His will, even when it does not oblige in conscience, has a moral efficacy greater and of another sort than, for instance, that of a friend. Similarly, as he is the head of the religious body, he has a certain natural right that the members conform their wills to His; and this acquiescence of inferiors for the sake of God is always religious obedience.

130. Can a religious sin against the virtue of obedience without sinning against the vow?

One sins against the *special* virtue of obedience:

1. If one intends to fail in that virtue through a spirit of independence;

2. By formal contempt of authority (No. 131).[1]

131. What is to be said of an act of disobedience which is accompanied by contempt of authority or followed by considerable damage?

1. There is always grave sin in *formally* despising authority in a superior. I say *authority*, and

[1] According to very famous theologians (St. Thomas, Suarez, etc.), a simple act of disobedience does not constitute a sin against the special virtue of obedience. But it contains nearly always one or more sins against other virtues (No. 132).

not a defect which a religious thinks he sees in the person or in the injunction of a superior. It is owing to this formal contempt of authority that there is mortal sin in the *refusal of obedience* when, in connection with a thing prescribed, a religious dares to say to his superior, "*I will not obey*," or, "*I will not do it.*"

2. The sin is also grave when from any act of disobedience there will result a considerable damage, whether spiritual, temporal, to oneself, the community or the neighbor, whoever he be.

This grave sin is not against the special virtue of obedience, but against charity, and sometimes against justice. Some consider this moreover a sin against the vow.

132. Simple injunctions of superiors, therefore, do not oblige under pain of sin?

In certain institutes, simple injunctions of superiors (commands which are not made in virtue of the vow) oblige under pain of venial sin (probably against the vow).

In other institutes, these injunctions do not oblige, *of themselves*, under pain of sin. If then disobedience to a simple injunction involves some sin, which is nearly always the case, this is due either to the violation of *another* obligation, or to scandal given, or to a bad intention, an ill-regulated affection, lack of prudence in the manner of acting, etc.

***133. Is there anything else to be remarked?**

The religious who thus accustoms himself to disobey in consequence of his ill-regulated affections will soon lose even the spirit of obedience; and as a result, among the other spiritual wrongs which he inflicts on himself and, too often, on his brethren, he will weaken in himself the very principle of the vow and place it in danger.

134. Do the rules (or constitutions) impose their obligation under pain of sin?

In most institutes the rules do not oblige, *of themselves*, under pain of sin.

But (1) one sins in violating a rule which embodies a prescription of the Commandments of God or of the Church, or which determines the matter of the vows; (2) a religious rarely fails in the observance of any of the other rules without there being in the act some offence against God.

135. How is this explained?

Because it is often pride or vanity or sensuality or sloth or human respect which leads him to disobey; and every time he thus infringes a rule out of some bad motive, evidently there is a fault, ordinarily venial.

He sins moreover every time the violation of a

rule is a source of disedification or will result in some other damage.

Unless justified by a good motive (with a dispensation obtained or legitimately presumed), failure to observe a rule is always at least a positive imperfection. The rules are not simple counsels, but true laws; hence they impose a certain obligation on every member of the institute. From this it follows that a religious, in case of violation of rule, is bound under pain of sin to accept and perform a penance, if the superior imposes one on him.

136. What is to be said of habitual transgression of the rules?

Habitual transgression of the rules is much more culpable, both because of the contempt which it easily engenders, and because of the damage it does to *religious discipline.*

137. What is religious discipline?

From the etymology of the word, *discipline* means *teaching, training.*

Considered in the authority which governs, *religious discipline is the sum-total of the rules with their sanction.*

By the rules superiors *teach* the way which is to be followed; by penances in case of infraction they bring back those who have strayed and repair the scandal given.

Considered in inferiors, *discipline* is also called *regular observance,* and is *the faithful observance of*

the rules, in which observance all the members of the community unite in holy harmony.[1]

138. Of what importance is discipline in the religious state?

So important is regular discipline that it must be considered as morally necessary for the conservation of the order as a whole, for that of the religious life in a community, and for that of the spiritual life in each individual.

139. What is the obligation of superiors with regard to religious discipline?

According to what we have said, it is easy to see that superiors are under grave obligation to maintain religious discipline in the community; and in this regard, connivance on their part can easily become a considerable sin.[2]

140. Are we obliged likewise to obey inferiors who have received some portion of authority from superiors?

Yes, we are bound to obey them with the same exactitude, *when what they command is within*

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[1] On the obligation of superiors and inferiors to observe the constitutions, see C. 593 and following.

[2] Points especially recommended by the Code to the vigilance of superiors are: exercises of piety and the frequentation of the Sacraments (C. 595); the wearing of the religious habit (C. 596); enclosure (C. 597); good relations with the clergy in apostolic ministrations (Cc. 608, 609).

their powers. To the superior we owe more deference and respect, but we owe an equal obedience to anyone vested with authority.

ARTICLE III

DEFECTS HARMFUL TO RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

***141. Apart from sins directly against obedience, are there not certain defects which harm it indirectly and lead to its formal violation?**

Yes, there are several defects of this kind against which the religious cannot be too much on his guard, if he wishes to avoid countless faults and does not wish to expose himself to violating the vow.

***142. What are these defects?**

Prejudices, hostility to the superior or to what he commands, and judgments contrary to his.

Murmurings and criticism, moroseness and willful spites.

Excuses, pretexts and subterfuges for escaping orders given.

Slowness and carelessness in obeying, especially such as can endanger success in carrying out commands.

***143. Point out some other defects which rob obedience of all its merit and value.**

Obeying without submission of will, but only exteriorly and to be rid of the matter.

Obeying through fear, as slaves do, and only because one is seen.

Obeying through policy, self-love, to win the favor of the superior.

"This," says St. Bernard, "is not an exercise of virtue, but a cloak whereby one hides his own malice."

***144. When a superior has refused something to a religious, may the latter address himself to another superior for the same thing?**

He may do so only if he makes known the answer of the first superior and the reasons for his refusal; subordination and order demand this.[1]

***145. Is it forbidden to state to superiors objections which one considers lawful?**

No. Superiors are even glad to get a clear view of things.

But (1) before speaking, the religious must

[1] The permission granted by the second superior, though he is not informed of the refusal of the first, is nevertheless valid, unless the contrary is formally expressed by the constitutions or the superiors.

reflect in the presence of God and dispose himself to accept fully the decision of the superior; (2) his statement must be made most modestly and respectfully.

ARTICLE IV

DEGREES AND PERFECTION OF RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

***146. What are the degrees by which one rises to perfect obedience?**

There are three: obedience of execution, obedience of will, and obedience of judgment.

***147. In what does the first degree of obedience consist?**

It consists in doing faithfully that which is commanded.

***148. What qualities are necessary to this first degree?**

Obedience of execution should be *prompt* and *entire.*

It is *prompt* if you do without delay that which has been commanded, as if God Himself spoke to you by the mouth of the superior or called you at the first sound of the bell.

It is *entire* if you carry out what is enjoined as the superior directs, with fitting exactitude, care and dispatch.

***149. What is the second degree, or obedience of will?**

It is that interior obedience which unites our will to that of the superior, by making us do willingly what he wishes and prescribes.

***150. Is interior obedience very necessary?**

It is so necessary that without it obedience of execution would be unworthy of the name of that virtue, so mean and imperfect would it be.

On the contrary, interior obedience is full of merit and grandeur, because it makes us obey God Himself, manifesting His will or His good pleasure through the superior.

***151. What qualities should be found in obedience of will?**

It should go hand in hand with *joy* and *courage:*

1. We should obey *joyfully* because, as St. Paul says, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix, 7), and besides, because this cheerfulness facilitates obedience wonderfully. But there is question here much less of human and sensible joy than of that spiritual contentment of will which

is always within our power in spite of natural repugnances.

2. We should obey *courageously* in order to vanquish the difficulties which may be met with and to make generously the sacrifices which God asks. Thus, one of the great merits of obedience is to leave full liberty to superiors to dispose of us for employments and places, without attention to our dislikes and natural fears.

***152. What is the third degree, or obedience of judgment?**

Obedience of judgment is had when the will, already submissive, obliges the judgment also to submit itself to the judgment of the superior.

***153. Is this third degree of obedience always possible?**

Except in extremely rare cases where the opposite is evident, the religious can and should always be persuaded that what is commanded him is better, in itself or at least for him, than the contrary.

***154. Why is it necessary to rise to this third degree of obedience?**

For two reasons: (1) to help towards and to

insure obedience of execution and of will, which can otherwise easily fail; (2) to offer to God by obedience the homage of one's whole soul and not to hold back from him our best possession—our intellect.

***155. What are the means of acquiring perfect obedience?**

The general means are *humility* and *meekness*. Besides, there are three particular means: (1) always to see God in the superior who commands; (2) always to seek to justify to oneself the command and intention of the superior and never to permit oneself to condemn him; in this way one remains ever well-disposed towards what he commands; (3) especially, once the superior has commanded anything, to regard it as the command of God Himself and, with the zeal of a will which aims only at obedience, to proceed without examining, without questioning, to the performance of the thing commanded.

According to the masters of the spiritual life, obedience is in some way a mystery of faith, like the Eucharist in which the sacramental species conceal the presence of Jesus Christ. In obeying, I respect the authority of God Himself which is present in that of my superior, according to His words: "He that heareth you heareth Me." In obeying, I entrust myself to the wisdom, the goodness and the faithfulness of God, Who wills that I be subject to His representative. If the superior has faults, God has

none, and it is He Whom I serve. If the superior gives a wrong command, provided it be not sinful, I always do well in obeying, and God will know how to direct my obedience to His glory and my good.

THE END

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